

KEEP IT IN THE FAIRWAY



A GOLF DEVOTION BY
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Hole 1 – Keep it in the Fairway

"Reverse every natural instinct and do the opposite of what you are inclined to do, and you will probably come very close to having a perfect golf swing." ~ Ben Hogan

"Trust the Lord completely, and don't depend on your own knowledge. With every step you take, think about what he wants, and he will help you go the right way. Don't trust in your own wisdom, but fear and respect the Lord and stay away from evil." Proverbs 3:5-7 ERV

"There is a way which seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death." Proverbs 14:12 NASB

Questioning God's wisdom and direction is as old as time itself. Our first parents in the garden of Eden, were duped by the evil one to question God's word and His goodness. By questioning God's word and goodness they concluded that they knew what was best rather than God Himself. Giving in to that temptation set humanity in a trajectory of bad decisions, difficulty, and death itself.

In golf vernacular, they set out to play a round without consulting someone who knows the course, which club to use, and how to keep it in the fairway. Golf is so much more enjoyable when you are in the fairway. When we are not in the fairway, we make the difficult game of golf much more difficult.

Likewise in life when we choose to not trust God's word and wisdom, we do life in the rough and out of bounds. When you are in the rough or out of bounds you want to quit. But when we do life God's way, we are doing life in the fairway. Which means a much more joy filled life!

Hole 2 – A Good Walk... Spoiled

Mark Twain is famously quoted as saying the golf is like a good walk, spoiled. This goes to heart of both the golf and the Christian walk.

"Then the Lord God appointed a plant, and it grew up to provide shade over Jonah's head to ease his discomfort. Jonah was greatly pleased with the plant. When dawn came the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, and it withered. As the sun was rising, God appointed a scorching east wind. The sun beat down so much on Jonah's head that he almost fainted, and he wanted to die. He said, "It's better for me to die than to live." Then God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "Yes," he replied. "It is right. I'm angry enough to die!" Jonah 4:6-9 CSB

Jonah was right in the middle of God's plan for his life, and after being good at his tasks, he was angry, discouraged and ready to die. The issue was his attitude, not his performance.

Golf can be similar, a few good holes in a row, and we start thinking we're a pretty big deal. A few blow-up holes later and we remember we're not. Anger on the golf course? Check. Frustration? Check. Was it a good day or a bad day? Depends on our attitude. I'm reminded of the Proverb

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22 NIV

Being out in God's creation, feeling the sun and the wind on our faces, how can we be so consumed by our own performance that we completely neglect where we're at and who we serve?

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge." Psalm 19:1-2 NIV

Hole 3 – It Goes by Fast

“As you walk down the fairway of life you must smell the roses, for you only get to play one round.” ~ Ben Hogan

“Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.” Psalm 90:12 CSB

For people who truly enjoy the game of golf, the anticipation of a fun round is very real. A round of golf sometimes is great and sometimes very grueling. Life is much like that. Sometimes great and sometimes grueling.

*As the adage says regarding life:
“The days are long, yet the years are short.”*

The truth is the older you get the faster time seems to go by. Remembering that life is short should be a great motivator to live our lives to the fullest.

Jesus said: “A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.” John 10:10 CSB

How do we live the full life that Jesus promises? **Love.** Living our brief lives here on earth loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving others as ourselves. A life well lived is a life well loved.

The greatness of a life well lived is not it's length but it's impact. We impact others by loving them. Serving them. Forgiving them. By giving away our lives to love God and others first will cause us to live a life beyond regret.

*Life is short. Eternity is forever.
“...to live is Christ and to die is gain.”
Philippians 1:21*

Hole 4 – Keeping Your Head Down

“Keep your eyes on Jesus...”

Hebrews 12:2

“Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.”
Hebrews 12:1-3 CSB

The most common error in golf is called "early extension" where the golfer stands or "pops up" out of his posture on the downswing before hitting the ball. It is for this reason nearly every golf coach reminds us to keep our head down and stay focused.

Add to this technical challenge the course designer’s intent - that is to distract you from the task at hand. The very best golf course, think Pebble Beach or St. Andrews captivate the golfer’s attention, pulling attention away to admire what is truly a captivating environment.

Golf can be a lot like the Christian walk. We must ignore the distractions, not get lost in our head, but focus on the object of our intent. For the golfer, it is the ball. For the believer, it is our Lord.

Spiritually, we’re called to this same discipline — eyes on Christ, don’t quit early. No celebrating in the fairway, rewards occur after play has concluded.

Hole 5 – If It Was Easy, Everyone Would Play

"It took me seventeen years to get 3,000 hits. I did it in one afternoon on the golf course." ~ Hank Aaron (Hall of Fame baseball player)

Golf is not an easy game. Some people make it look easy because they have had lessons, started young, or it just comes natural to them. Like life, golf can be frustrating. You feel like you are improving one round and then totally regress on the next one.

The Apostle Paul laments our struggle and frustration in this life with sin when he writes:

"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." Romans 7:15-19 NASB 95

If Paul were to compare our frustration with sin to the game of golf, he might say it something like this:

"Playing golf feels just like this: I step up to the tee with a clear plan in mind—I want to drive the ball straight down the fairway. But somehow, despite my intentions, I slice it into the rough. I line up a putt, visualizing the perfect line, yet I pull it wide. The shots I want to make, I don't make; the mistakes I swore I wouldn't repeat, I repeat again and again. It's as if there's a disconnect between what I know and what I do. I love the game and strive to play it well, but something in me keeps pulling the swing off course. I see the right shot in my head—but somehow, I still shank it."

Golf is filled with good days and bad days. So, it is with our walk with Jesus. In our walk with Jesus let's rejoice like Paul did:

"What a miserable person I am! Who will save me from this body that brings me death? I thank God for his salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:24-25 ERV

In our golf game, let's rejoice in the simple fact that, for most of us, it's just a game. When someone asks, 'How did you play?' hopefully you

can say, 'I had some good holes!'

Hole 6 – The First Rule of Trouble, Is to Get Out of Trouble

Some number of rounds ago, I found myself in a bunker where I had no realistic shot toward the pin. If you've played much golf, maybe you've found yourself in this type of dilemma. I could try the hero shot and maybe pull it off, or I could look silly after leaving it in the bunker, or... I could be smart and take my medicine, hitting away from the hole and leaving myself a reasonable chance to get up and down. On this day, I wanted to be the hero and keep my score going. Suddenly, one lost shot turned into two.

The key to scoring in golf is bogey (or double bogey) avoidance, and the best way to do that is take your medicine, and don't let a bogey turn into a double. Sometimes the best decision you can make is to hit away from the hole, to save yourself a shot.

This situation mirrors life in many ways; sometimes we put ourselves in bad spots, and we don't have a good way forward. We're in trouble, but rather than following the prudent advice, we try the hero shot, hoping we can avoid the sting of our mistake.

In my experience, doubling down on bad decisions seldom works for the good. Sometimes the best way forward is to go in a completely different direction. We would call this 'repentance' and the best thing to turn to is Jesus Christ.

“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call to Him while He is near. Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive.” Isaiah 55:6-7 CSB

When you're stuck in the bunker, whether on the course or in life; the best shot isn't always the boldest; it's the wisest. And sometimes the wisest thing we can do is admit we're in trouble, turn away from the mess, and trust the One who can set our feet back on solid ground.

Hole 7 – We Are Talking About Practice

"To give yourself the best possible chance of playing to your potential, you must prepare for every eventuality. That means practice." ~ Steve Ballesteros

Transformation always requires discipline. To get healthy physically will require discipline with diet and exercise. To become a better golfer will require the discipline to practice. To the degree we want to become better at golf will depend on our willingness to practice and learn from better golfers.

Our spiritual transformation depends on who we are learning from regarding what real transformation looks like. Jesus said:

"A student is not above the teacher; but everyone, when he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Luke 6:40 NASB (See also Romans 8:29)

Jesus also said:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-31 NASB

Jesus tells us that transformation starts by coming to Him and learning from Him. The goal of a disciple of Jesus is to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus did. Transformation happens as we arrange our lives around the same priorities that marked the life of Jesus. This requires discipline.

"...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." 1 Timothy 4:7-8 NASB

The three main spiritual disciplines that Jesus regularly practiced are, reading scripture, prayer, and fellowship. Pursue these disciplines not as a to do list, but as a means of transformation as you commune with God.

Hole 8 – The Coin in Your Pocket

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us... made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.” Ephesians 2:4-5 ESV

What do you use to mark your golf ball?

I carry a coin—on one side, it has my initials; on the other, it says, 'Talk birdie to me.' It makes me smile and helps keep things light. But that coin also got me thinking. As a believer, it's a fitting symbol of something profound—two sides, like two attributes of God that are central to the Christian faith: mercy and grace.

Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve.

Golf doesn't offer either. The game is exact. Every stroke counts. You pay the price for every mistake—no do-overs, no leniency. It's a game built on personal integrity, accountability, and rules. That's part of what I love about it.

But life? Life's a little more like hitting into the water on 13, then wishing you could just drop another ball and try again. Sometimes, you want to bend the rules—not to cheat, but because the weight of the last shot is just too much.

The good news? God is not like golf.

In His mercy, God doesn't give us what we deserve—judgment, separation, condemnation. In His grace, He gives us what we never earned—forgiveness, peace, eternal life.

Through Jesus Christ, we are offered relief, not from a tight lie or a sand trap, but from the burden of sin and the pressure of perfection. When we receive the living water He offers (John 4:10), we don't just get a mulligan we get a new life.

“Jesus answered, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would ask Him, and He would give you living water.” John 4:10 CSB

So next time you reach into your pocket and pull out that coin, think about it: one side mercy, one side grace. Two sides of the same

saving love. And a reminder that while golf may charge full fare, our Father in heaven paid the full price—so we could play this life free.

Lord, thank You for Your mercy, that withholds the judgment we deserve. Thank You for Your grace, that gives the blessing we could never earn. Help me walk today with gratitude, humility, and confidence—not because I'm perfect, but because You are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hole 9 – A View from the Bunker

"Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots; you get good breaks from bad shots, but you have to play the ball where it lies." ~ Bobby Jones

"If your golf game is anything like mine, you find yourself in the sand traps a little too often. As a recreational golfer, I find them especially difficult to escape from cleanly. Some holes have sand traps not only around the green but also right in the middle of the fairway—exactly where my ball tends to land. When that happens, the hole can feel hopeless. I find myself thinking, 'How can I recover from this?'

Life has plenty of sand traps so to speak. I love the honesty of Jesus:

"I told you these things so that you can have peace in me. In this world you will have trouble, but be brave! I have defeated the world." John 16:33 NCV

Jesus is letting us know that the world as we know it and experience it is not heaven. It is a journey toward heaven.

Therefore, we should expect difficulty as we journey through life. Whether it be a relational challenge, a health crisis, a financial shortage, an unexplainable accident, loss, grief, or any other trial. The old saying "when life gives you lemons make lemonade (I prefer when life gives you limes make margaritas), is very true!

"Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." James 1:2-4 NASB

Next time you are in a sand trap in life or on the course take joy! Either your faith is being strengthened or you have been given an opportunity to improve your golf game!

Hole 10 – The Raincheck

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.” Acts 16:6 NIV

You show up at the course—clubs cleaned, shoes laced, swing ready. The forecast looked promising, but then the clouds roll in. Thunder rumbles. The pro shop calls you in and hands you a raincheck.

You still have the passion to play. You were ready to go. But now, all you have is a slip of paper that says, 'Not today.'

Paul understood this kind of disappointment. In Acts 16, he and his companions were actively pursuing their mission—planning to preach the Gospel in Asia (likely Ephesus). But Scripture says they were 'kept by the Holy Spirit' from going—not by opposition or closed borders, but by God Himself.

No explanation. No vision yet. Just a divine raincheck.

Funny thing about rainchecks—they don't cancel your game; they just delay it. In the moment, it can feel like a loss. A letdown. Maybe even like God is closing doors you were sure He had opened.

But read on: that redirection led Paul to Macedonia—to Philippi—where Lydia was converted, a church was planted, and God moved powerfully. The detour was actually divine guidance.

Sometimes in life—and in faith—we get benched, rerouted, or held back from things we deeply want. Maybe even things that seem clearly *good*. In those moments, God may not give an immediate reason. But He always has a purpose.

Faith isn't just believing God will use us when we go—it's believing He's still working when He says, *Wait*.

So, the next time life hands you a raincheck, hold onto it with hope. Trust that your round's not over—it's just rescheduled for a better time, and maybe a better course. Pivot, and use this time to be with family, connect with a friend, or spend a few extra moments in prayer.

Father, thank You for the doors You open—and the ones You close. Help me trust You, even when the timing doesn't make sense. Give me peace when plans are paused, and faith to believe that You are always guiding my steps. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hole 11 – Who is in Your Foursome?

*"I never rooted against an opponent, but I never rooted for him either."
~ Arnold Palmer*

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful." Colossians 3:12-15 NLT

In life you can choose your friends, but you do not get to choose your family. The same is true in the body of Christ. We can choose who we fellowship with, but we do not get to choose who God accepts into His family.

Ironically the same is true at the golf course. As you set your tee time you have to say how many people you will be golfing with. If you do not have three other people golfing with you the course will allow other random golfers to play the round with you. You never know what kind of person you will get matched with. They might be quirky, grouchy, easy going, quiet and so on. You do not have a choice to play the round with them or not regardless of your experience with them.

The same principle applies in the church. The apostle Paul instructed believers: *"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you."* We're not commanded to like everyone, but we are called to love one another. Someone in the church will eventually rub you the wrong way—or even offend you. Make room for it. That's part of being in a family—specifically, His family.

Hole 12 – The Back Nine

Golf isn't a game you conquer. You don't "win" at golf—you play it. Each hole presents its own challenge. Some reward you; others humble you. Even the best players in the world don't beat the game—they respect it, adapt to it, and keep going. Because golf is, at its core, a game of managing mistakes.

Life is the same.

"...let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith." Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

On the front nine, we often chase dreams, careers, and personal bests. We hit big drives and take bold risks. But eventually, we make the turn—to the back nine. The second half. And the game begins to shift.

Fatigue sets in. The course feels longer. You hit the doldrums. And yet—this stretch is where finishing well matters most.

Hebrews reminds us: this isn't an endless loop. There is a finish line. And trophies aren't handed out in the fairways—only at the end. We're called to run with perseverance, keeping our eyes on Jesus, "the source and perfecter of our faith."

In golf, when you let a good round slip away at the end, that's called a *7-Eleven*—it never closes. In life, failing to finish well can have real and lasting consequences.

You don't get a medal for a clean front nine. The reward comes when you finish faithful, focused, and still walking.

And when it gets hard—when you're fighting the slice, feeling the weight of the years, or staring down a long par 5 into a headwind?

"Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne." Hebrews 12:2 CSB

Remember Jesus, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

No one said the back nine would be easy. But it's where the story deepens—where character is forged, and eternity draws near.

So, walk it well.

Not with fear, but with faith.

Not for the applause of the gallery, but for the smile of the One waiting in the heavenly clubhouse.

Jesus, thank You for walking ahead of me, for enduring the cross, and for showing me how to finish faithfully. When I grow weary, remind me that the race has a purpose. Help me to keep going—with focus, humility, and hope. Amen.

Hole 13 – Rules and Etiquette

“Golf is a game of etiquette and respect.” Unknown

“Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law.” Romans 13:8 NLT

The game of golf originally had just 13 rules. Over time, that number expanded to 34. But recently, the rules were streamlined back down to 24.

For beginners, learning the rules of golf takes time. It requires playing with seasoned golfers and becoming familiar with the official rulebook. Beyond the written rules, golf also has its own etiquette—unwritten guidelines that, while not enforced like the rules, are essential to playing the game well and showing respect to others on the course.

In a similar way, Scripture began with a smaller set of core commands—ten, to be exact. These are the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20). Over time, that number expanded into a broader body of law found in the Old Testament (see Leviticus and Deuteronomy), eventually totaling 613 commandments.

These 613 laws included both formal rules and guiding principles—what we might call “spiritual etiquette.” Together, they shaped the life and identity of ancient Israel. They were meant to be obeyed out of love for God (Deuteronomy 6:4–5) and love for neighbor (Leviticus 19:18).

But 613 laws are a lot. How could anyone learn and live them all?

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus interprets the heart behind the law. He shows that the law was never just about rules—it was always about relationship. He summarizes the entire law and kingdom etiquette in one word: **love**.

When we love—truly love, as described in 1 Corinthians 13—we are fulfilling all the rules of God’s kingdom.

“If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.” James 2:8 NASB

Hole 14 – Reading the Green

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6 CSB

Ben Hogan once joked that putts should only count for half a stroke. And if you've ever stood over a slick downhill six-footer, you might agree. The stroke may be small—but the consequences are huge. Putting is the game within the game.

You can hit a perfect drive, stick your approach shot—and still walk away disappointed because of a misread or a momentary lapse in focus.

But the opposite is also true: a good putter can save par from 60 feet or turn a messy hole into a quiet recovery. It's not how you start the hole—it's how you finish it.

One of golf's great paradoxes is that the closer we get to the hole, the more focused we must become. Each shot demands more precision than the last, with the putting green requiring the clearest mind of all. It's there we learn a crucial truth: the difference between “almost” and “in” is precise—and unrelenting.

And it's at that point I begin to see a parallel to Scripture.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14 CSB

It feels a bit like putting to me. Our walk of faith mirrors this same idea—that the closer we get to the finish, the more focus is required. As we grow in our faith and deepen our understanding, we develop greater discernment.

One of the most frustrating outcomes in golf is to stripe the drive, stick the approach—and then lose the hole with a poor putt.

Life can feel the same. As we near the finish line, our focus on Him must sharpen. We learn to trust more fully, to walk more faithfully. Because when we trust the Lord to set the line, we can be sure—it will roll true.

Father, teach me to trust You—not just with the big decisions, but with

the small ones, too. Help me slow down and read the moments of life with wisdom, not relying on my own sight, but leaning on Your Spirit. Guide my steps. Set my aim. Keep my heart and my nerve steady. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hole 15 – The Greatest Hazard of All

"Of all the hazards (in golf), fear is the worst." ~ Sam Snead

*"Even when I go through the darkest valley, I **fear** no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me." Psalm 23:4 CSB*

*"The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom should I **fear**? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— whom should I dread?" Psalm 25:1 CSB*

As in golf, life presents its own set of hazards. In golf, hazards are anything that interferes with your shot—water, bunkers, trees, and thick rough. In life, hazards are anything that threatens to rob us of our peace and joy.

And the greatest hazard of all? **Fear**.

Fear is the number one peace-stealer for most people. Fear of the unknown. Fear of death. Fear of sickness. Fear of betrayal. Fear of what tomorrow might bring. These fears can easily creep in and cloud our confidence, keeping us from living with freedom and faith.

Jesus said:

*"Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?" Matthew 6:27
NLT*

In Mark 4:35–41 and Matthew 8:23–27, we read about a time when Jesus and His disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and a violent storm arose. The disciples feared for their lives—they thought they were about to die. Meanwhile, Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. In their panic, they woke Him, crying out, "We are perishing!"

Jesus stood, spoke to the storm, and it immediately calmed. That was a miracle.

But perhaps the greater miracle was this: Jesus was able to sleep through the storm. He had no fear—because He fully trusted His Father.

In the same way, we can face the hazard of fear by placing our trust in Jesus and holding onto His promises. He is with us in the storm—and that changes everything.

Hole 16 – Walk the Course

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, rooted and built up..." Colossians 2:6–7 CSB

There's a difference between riding and walking the course.

Sure, the cart is faster. Easier. It keeps your legs fresh. It lets you enjoy a hot dog and cool beverage. But when you walk, something changes. You feel the contours of the land. You notice the wind. You experience every yard of the hole. You are in it, fully engaged with the game and the course.

And life is no different.

Many of us want to move quickly. Skip the hard stretches. Take shortcuts. Coast when we're tired. But sanctification isn't a cart ride, it's a walk. Deliberate. Grounded. Embodied. Step by step. Jesus doesn't call us to hurry through life, He calls us to walk with Him.

"Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, overflowing with gratitude." Colossians 2:6 CSB

Paul writes, "walk in Him." That means staying rooted in Christ as we move through our ordinary days—refusing to rush through the rough, to check out when the climb gets steep, or to zone out between holes.

It's in the walking that we develop awareness. Dependence. Maturity.

You might reach the 18th hole faster in a cart—but you'll miss the beauty of the course. You'll miss the quiet moments where God speaks. You'll miss the subtle contours of the journey—the terrain He's trying to teach you how to read.

So slow down. Lace your shoes. Walk with God—step by step.

There's no rush to finish.

But there is meaning in *how* you make the journey.

Lord, help me not to rush through life or my faith. Teach me to walk with You—to be present, to notice, to grow as I go. Give me the patience to trust Your pace, and the strength to stay in step with You. Amen.

Hole 17 – Integrity is Everything

"Golf... is the infallible test. The man who can go into a patch of rough alone, with the knowledge that only God is watching him, and play his ball where it lies, is the man who will serve you faithfully and well." ~ P. G. Wodehouse

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out." Proverbs 10:9 ESV

The game of golf can tempt even the best players to fudge the numbers—giving themselves a better score than they actually earned. For recreational golfers, it might not seem like a big deal. No one's getting paid to play, and most of the time, no one is really watching.

But in life, **integrity is everything to God.**

We serve a faithful God who *is* the very definition of integrity (see Titus 1:2). God cannot lie. He always keeps His word. When we walk with integrity, we reflect His character.

Someone once said, *"Reputation is who people think we are. Character is who we really are."*

Integrity is who we are when no one is looking.

Integrity is something no one can take from us—but we can give it away. And when we do, it's hard to get back. Thankfully, God offers us the gift of repentance, and He is always ready to forgive.

Pray as David prayed:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10 ESV

Hole 18 – Finish Strong

Every round of golf eventually reaches the 18th tee.

By now, the body is tired, the bag feels heavier, and every swing is more deliberate. You've walked the course, faced the wind, battled the rough, and hopefully found a few fairways. But now, it's the final hole. No more warmups. No more do-overs.

Only one question remains:

How will you finish?

"Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12–14 CSB

The Apostle Paul knew the weight of this question. He wrote with urgency—not about perfection, but about persistence. *"Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead..."* Paul wasn't coasting. He was charging toward the flag on 18.

The writer of Hebrews echoes the call:

"Run with endurance the race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Not watching the leaderboard. Not scanning the crowd. Eyes locked on the pin.

As believers, we're not promised ease on the final holes. In fact, the closer we get to the finish, the more focused we must become. Distractions grow louder. Regrets creep in. But this is where grit matters most. This is where eternity comes into view.

You may not have played a perfect round. You've likely had strong starts, missed chances, and moments you'd take back if you could. But the grace of God isn't found on your scorecard—it's found in your endurance. And if you're still walking, you're still in it.

So, walk with purpose.

Swing with faith.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Finish strong.

Lord, I don't want to coast to the end. Give me strength to press on, courage to stay focused, and grace to finish the race You've marked out for me. Help me keep my eyes on Jesus—and play the last hole with everything I've got. Amen.

Hole 19 – A Golfer's Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of this day and the beauty of Your creation that surrounds the course.

As I play, help me to enjoy the game, be patient with myself and others,

And reflect Your character through my attitude and actions.

Teach me humility when things are going well,

And grant me grace when they don't go as planned.

Let each swing remind me that perfection isn't the goal—

But progress, perseverance, and peace in You.

May this game be more than just competition;

May it be a time of fellowship, refreshment, and joy.

Keep me safe, and keep my heart centered on what matters most—

Your love, Your truth, and the people I'm blessed to share this time with.

In Jesus' name, Amen.